

Peter Hill



SUPER  
FICTIONS

*The*

# ARTFAIR

*Murders*

*A Novel*

*An Installation*

*A Superfiction*



For two years Peter Hill has been simultaneously writing a novel and building an art installation. He calls both 'The Art Fair Murders'. Hill has named this sort of hybrid a **superfiction** which he describes as an event which unites the visual arts with another discipline through an attitude which he describes as '**Heroic Amateurism**'. His various superfictions are linked by the World Wide Web. They can all be found on

<http://toolshed.artschool.utas.edu.au/moci/home.html>

Hill's first superfiction was conceived in 1986 and was an imaginary museum in New York - notionally the world's largest and newest called THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY IDEAS. It had its billionaire benefactors in Alice and Abner 'Bucky' Cameron who made their wealth through the Cameron oil fields off Alaska and its highly qualified director Dr Sunday Anderson with her seventeen department heads. Hill still sends out press releases around the world to curators, collectors, critics, and the media. At this level his work is concerned with notions of camouflage and trompe l'oeil - fabricating traces of the real world to make them look as if they exist.

In 1989 - the year of revolution in which the novel is set - the real art magazine *Wolkenkratzer* based in Frankfurt believed Hill's museum to be real and published an article about it which was widely discussed across Germany. As a result the editor Dr Wolfgang Max Faust was asked to chair a meeting of German industrialists and museum curators to see if Frankfurt could build a museum to rival New York's MOCI.

In a sense the importance of superfictions is that through fiction things can happen quicker and more ambitiously than through 'fact'.

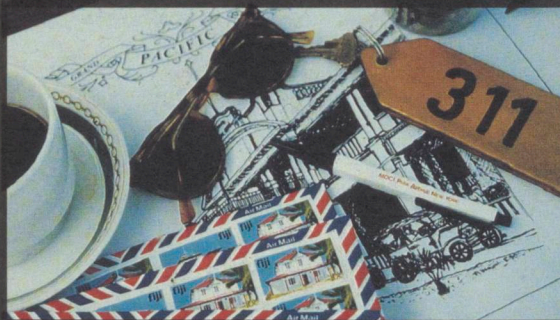
Hill bases his notions of testing the truth of any given organisational structure through Sir Karl Popper's device of sophisticated methodological falsificationism. If this represents the so called elitist extreme of his project 'the hoax' represents the opposite, populist extreme and Hill enjoys nothing more than having his serious intentions misrepresented in the popular press who rarely see beyond the persona of the confidence trickster.

Peter Hill's latest superfiction which begins its world tour in Auckland's New Gallery of Contemporary Art unites the world of the visual arts with that of literary (and pulp) fiction. The Art Fair Murders takes place during the press view of a commercial art fair. These events are like boat shows, car shows, or home shows. Commercial galleries from all over the world rent booths in

large trade halls like Olympia in London and exhibit the works of their choice. It is totally commercial and contrasts well with the curatorial rigour associated with museum exhibitions. Australian regional landscape painting could hang in one booth whose neighbours might be selling neo geo art works from Manhattan or early masterpieces from 'The School of Paris'. There is a major international art fair somewhere on the planet at least once a month. In 1989, the year in which the novel is set and also the year of revolutions and the time when the bubble burst in the international art market - the art fair calendar ran something like this: January, Miami; February, ARCO in Madrid; March, London; April, Frankfurt; May, Chicago (in the beautiful Navy Piers where some of the great James Cagney movies were filmed), and so on to Los Angeles in December and the climax of the novel.

But the doors are now open. The press view has started. Let's go in.

Most of the galleries have set up their wares and uncorked the Montana wine. Others have still to clear away their crates and sweep up the bubble-wrap. A few galleries have been delayed at customs and their booths look like eyeless sockets. There is a feeling of excitement in the air - a sexual tension. And then there is the sound of a gun shot. The art fair murders have begun...





## A Synthetic-Modernist Riddle

**When does a murder become an art work?**

**When does an art work become a text on a wall?**

**When does a text on a wall become a lecture?**

**When does a lecture become a performance?**

**When does a performance become an art work?**

**When does an art work become a murder?**



EXCERPT FROM

## The ART FAIR Murders

### The Triplet Twins

Once our fragile planet reaches a certain size it becomes statistically inevitable that pairs of famous twins will emerge in various disciplines. Thus the art world already has The Starn Twins in

America and Jane and Louise Wilson in England operating, as it were, out of a single cell. Bigger still, and

we can expect triplets. Perhaps not surprisingly just such a set has emerged in Japan - but only two of the three work together as artists. The third is the manager of a florist shop in the girls' home city of Tokyo.

The on-going project of The Triplet Twins as they like to be called - or The Trips as the London tabloids have dubbed them - is also very much of the moment fitting in with the late eighties trend for artists to work in teams.

They are neo-conceptualists who create what are known as *superfictions*.

## Extracts from The Encyclopaedia of Superfictions:

**ALOHA**, an art team from Brisbane, Australia. They take art and tourism as their subject matter and also make wry comments on the sort of merchandise sold in museum shops around the world. See The Hermann Nitsch Shower Curtain.

Some of their work takes the form of what Marcel Duchamp called assisted readymades. One of these, a child-size tartan ironing board which, in the one icon, was supposed to stand for the oppression of women, children, and Scotland as a nation, was smuggled in to the 1990 Sydney Biennale and photographed next to works by Richard Wentworth, Hermann Pitz, Rebecca Horn, and others. These were later exhibited in the 1990 exhibition *New Complexities New Dance Steps as large C prints*.

**AMEISENHAUFEN, DR PETER**, see Joan Fontcuberto and Pere Formiguera.

**ANTARCTIC RIP TIDE**, a New Zealand art collective whose photographs and installations catch art world personalities in unguarded moments

**ANTHOLOGY OF NEW ART TERMS**: This section is under construction and will eventually include a range of new art terms and burgeoning art movements including: Heroic Amateurism, Logical Extermism, Synthetic Modernism, The Manhattan Archives, and Superfictions

**ART AGAINST ASTROLOGY**, an art collective from Antwerp who make installations and art objects that are critical of all forms of mythic thinking, of religion, and superstition. They lost some credibility as a group when two of their members converted to catholicism and a third joined The Church of Scientology.

**THE ART FAIR MURDERS**, a novel and art installation. This is the fourth superfiction orchestrated by New York's Museum of Contemporary Ideas. It is purportedly being written by a taxi driver called Jacko in Aberdeen, Scotland. He used to be an art transporter, lifting and lugging (but mostly lugging) art works to and from the world's major art fairs. Chicago one month, Basle the next. He began his novel *The Art Fair Murders* when he was 'sent up the hill' after his driver (Wee Shitey from Drumchapel) drove through the night from Cologne to assist in demolishing the Berlin Wall. On the way he lost a valuable Stanley Spencer painting. Other characters in the novel include two Aberdeen drug dealers called Prozac Jack and Temazepam Stan. Jack controls all the pubs west of Union Street and most of the city's secondary schools. Stan services the clientele of Jelly's Nightclub and all the housing estates north of Footdee. Jack is a Vietnam veteran who arrived in Aberdeen from Arizona to fly helicopters to and from the oil rigs. His desire for young school girls and illicit substances soon introduced him to the cages at Peterhead Prison. He lives in a tree house in Hazelhead Park, eats mostly cat food, and conducts his business by mobile phone. He is very dangerous and knows he is dying of AIDS.

Art Organisations and Complexity (Fulvio Carmagnola and Marco Senaldi, *Flash Art*, 1991, no 159)

To access all 26 volumes of the encyclopaedia please key in:

<http://toolshed.artschool.utas.edu.au/moc/encyc.html>



The call to the 24-hour emergency service at Cologne's Marien-Hospital was recorded as having been made at 2.37 that morning, Saturday the 19th of November 1989.

The woman spoke very quietly and slowly, German police later told a reporter. There was a man in her bathroom. He appeared to have drowned. She wasn't sure if he was still alive. Send someone quickly. Then she gave an address on the Klapperhof and abruptly hung up. Seven minutes later an ambulance was on the scene, but they would not be needed.

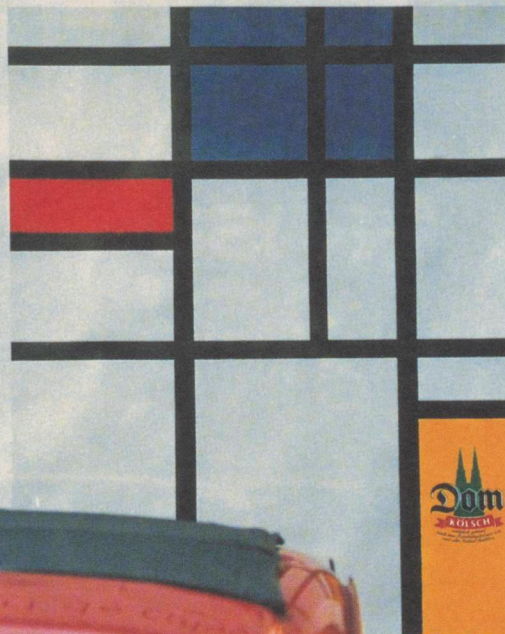
The police, who had been parked around the corner waiting to go off duty, had already arrived. The apartment was above a jazz and blues club. Outside, a chipped enamel sign for Dom lager creaked on its hinges. Inside, the naked figure of a middle-aged man lay in a bath which had been drained of all water. He could have been Japanese or Korean. The dragon tattoos which curled around his limbs said he was probably the former and most likely yakuza, a prominent figure in the ganglands of Tokyo, Osaka or most likely Kobe. The missing tips on two of his fingers would later confirm this speculation. Why was he in Cologne on a cold November night? The woman drinking vodka in the bedroom was a prostitute. She was the only person in the two-roomed flat apart from the corpse. West African, the police thought later, although she refused to speak when she found she was being detained for questioning. At this point she spat in the face of the younger policeman. He slapped her hard across the face with his leather glove and her pink fluro lipgloss smeared across her black cheek like a skid on tarmac. A bad cover version of Brownie McGhee's Million Lonesome Women penetrated the orange-carpeted brothel from the club below.

In the pathology lab the elderly forensic scientist who was a man of culture turned to Cologne's chief of police standing white-faced beside the Japanese Ambassador and quoting Borges said, "Like all men in Babylon, I have been proconsul; like all, a slave. I have known omnipotence, opprobrium, imprisonment. Look: the index finger on my right hand is missing. Look: through the rip in my cape you can see a vermilion tatoo on my stomach. It is the second symbol, Beth." The Japanese Ambassador wore a Pringle sweater and wished hard that he might be transported back to the golf course from which he had been summonsed at the par three fourteenth.

EXCERPT FROM

## The ARTFAIR Murders

art de cologne



Dom Kölsch

### Museum Merchandising Quotes: 'Velazquezabilia'

Before I even managed to get to the Edinburgh Festival's keynote exhibition, Velazquez in Seville, I collided with one of the most banal merchandising stands I'd ever encountered. It is a Fortnum and Mason's style display of **Velazquezabilia**: jars of Velazquez-label designer marmalade; Velazquez fridge magnets; Velazquez own-brand Spanish plonk and kitchen aprons; and Velazquez artisanal brown jugs and nests of rustic ceramic bowls (just like in the paintings!); and, for all I know (I was reeling by this time), Velazquez-flavoured novelty condoms."

Adrian Searle The Guardian Weekly, August 25, 1996, p 27.



EXCERPT FROM

# The ARTFAIR Murders

It was the 10th of August  
1995 and Jacko was getting set  
to drive his taxi down for

The Edinburgh International Festival. He wanted

to do a bit of research for chapter eight of his novel *The Art Fair Murders*. Edinburgh was positively tropical compared to Aberdeen and he was going to enjoy himself.

First up he would call in on Betty's for some purvey and have a crack with Zoran. Catch up on the latest instalment from Alpha Centauri.

But when he got there Zoran was nowhere to be seen. This had never happened before. Zoran was always there.

He peered through the grimy window pane and could see Zoran slumped in the big armchair next to the fire. He also thought he could hear music coming from the tapedeck. The door was always open.

- What's the matter Zoran? Jacko asked

It took the big bear of a man a minute to come round and focus on his grief.

- It's Jerry... Jerry's deed...

- Jerry? Whit Jerry? Ah dinnae ken any Jerry.

- Garcia. Jerry Garcia. He died a few hours ago. I gotta e-mail from Chinacat in Oakland.

Zoran was a Dead Head. No, Zoran was the Hydra of Dead Heads. It was the only music he ever listened to. There was no time to listen to anything else. In Zoran's house the music never stopped.



## The Archaeologist

This is a story told in fragments. It is a story which begins, 'Once upon many times, in many different places.' Be confused. Perhaps you will find yourself entering an art installation and leaving a novel. In the corner is a computer, its search engines revved up, its trillion strong workforce tense on their marks. *Yahoo. Hot Bot. Alta Vista. Webcrawler.* The noise of the starter's gun masks the first murder, but there will be others which you will witness. Don't look back...

*Jacko's Taxi Service*

*Intelligent Banter or a*

*Quiet Ride - your choice!*

Phone: Aberdeen 6461 3333

e-mail: [wbeels.on.fire@fins.quine.demon.co.uk](mailto:wbeels.on.fire@fins.quine.demon.co.uk)



*Jacko's Taxi Service*

*Intelligent Banter or a*

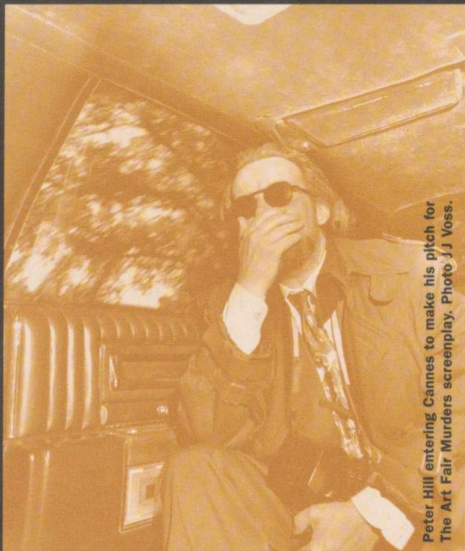
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Peter Hill entering Cannes to make his pitch for The Art Fair Murders screenplay. Photo: JJ Voss.

Chicago  
Aberdeen  
Miami  
Madrid  
London  
Melbourne  
Frankfurt  
Basel  
Amsterdam  
Hong Kong  
Edinburgh  
Paris  
Cologne  
Los Angeles

### **Peter Hill** *Born Glasgow, Scotland 1953.*

**1971-81** Attended three art schools in Scotland and England, graduating with First Class Honours; **1973** Employed as a lighthouse keeper on three islands off the West Coast of Scotland - Pladda, Ailsa Craig and Hyskeir; **1974** Witnessed the IRA Guildford Pub Bombings; **1982** Founder member of Transmission Gallery in Glasgow; **1983** Major Scottish Arts Council Award to work as artist in Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; **1986-90** Published/edited *Alba* magazine. Founded the Museum of Contemporary Ideas; **1988** British Council lecture tour of Australia; reviewed Bi-centenary Biennale of Sydney for *Artscribe* magazine; **1990** Artist-in residence, Prahran, Melbourne. **1991** Moved from Scotland to Australia. **1993** Exhibited *Superfictions* installation in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. **1996** Received Australia Council Development grant to research and write five books on international contemporary art.

### INTIMATIONS OF THE INTERNET

**'I'll put a girdle 'round the earth in 40 minutes'**

Puck, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

William Shakespeare, 1596

EXCERPT FROM

## *The* **ARTFAIR** *Murders*











I put the postcard in the inside pocket of my suit and it has been there ever since. I look at it often. That was six months ago in the early stages of background research I was commissioned to do for a television programme on the Spanish Civil War. I recount the story here because a similar postcard of Picasso's *Guernica*, like a million on sale in museums around the world, landed on the desk of *The Los Angeles Times* the day before the city's 1989 art fair was due to open. As I write this the people of Los Angeles are preparing for the worst and bomb alerts are being read out on every news bulletin. While the Bunker Hill district of central Los Angeles is deserted and the freeways north and south crowded with families fleeing from what may still turn out to be a hoax, a large crowd is still expected to attend the opening of tonight's International Contemporary Art Fair in the downtown convention centre.









|   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
|  | <b>WHEN NEXT IN NEW YORK</b>          |  |
|  | <b>WHY NOT MAKE A NOTE</b>            |  |
|  | <b>TO VISIT</b>                       |  |
|  | <b>THE NEW</b>                        |  |
|  | <b>BASEMENT</b>                       |  |
|   | <b>Plato's Cave</b>                   |   |
|   | <b>PLATO'S CAVE</b>                   |   |
|   | <b>BAR IN THE</b>                     |   |
|   | <b>OF THE</b>                         |   |
|   | <b>MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY IDEAS</b>   |   |
|   | <i>Linking Drinking with Thinking</i> |   |

Heroic Amateurism and other SUPERFICIONS:  
 Peter Hill interviewed by Jonnie Gimlet on:  
<http://toolshed.artschool.utas.edu.au/moci/home.html>

**"Don't take heroin, enjoy your  
 Christmas shopping, and try  
 to buy your Mum something  
 more imaginative than a  
 basket of toiletries"**

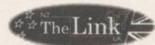
*Richard Benson Editor,  
 The Face December 1995*

**complementarity fell on its face  
 when a particle waded from a stationary place**

Wall text by The Triplet Twins from their **LIFE OF JAMES CLERK MAXWELL** (a rock opera)



TOI O TĀMAKI

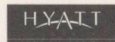


New Zealand and Britain - modern and evolving relationships



THE BUILDING DEPOT

CARPET TIME



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA



ICI PAINTS

PRESTIGE PARTY HIRE

**The Art Fair Murders** is an International Artist Project, organised by the Auckland Art Gallery and supported by the British Council under the aegis of its 50th anniversary in New Zealand: 29 March to 22 June 1997.

**Curator:** Andrew Bogle

**Photography:** John McIver, JJ Voss, Peter Hill

**Design:** Inhouse Design  
 Patrick Badger

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 ISBN 0 86463 219 3